UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

Official Records

SECOND COMMITTEE
48th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 20 November 1991
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 48th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. BURKE (Ireland)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 87: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO STUDY, MITIGATE AND MINIMIZE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DISASTER AT CHERNOBYL (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 77: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

(e) ENVIRONMENT

(f) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT

(g) HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

This record is subject to correction.
Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

91-57535 5366S (E)

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.2/46/SR.48
29 November 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 87: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO STUDY, MITIGATE AND MINIMIZE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DISASTER AT CHERNOBYL (continued) (A/C.2/46/L.30/Rev.1)

1. Mr. OUDOVENKO (Ukraine), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.30/Rev.1, entitled "Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster", said that the draft reviewed the activities of the United Nations system and the international community in the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster and also set the task of further consolidating international efforts. The fact that the draft resolution was sponsored by over 50 countries reflected the increasing international solidarity with the people affected by the Chernobyl disaster. He was grateful to Committee members for their active participation in the preliminary discussions, and hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

AGENDA ITEM 77: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

(e) ENVIRONMENT (A/46/3, 25, A/46/138-E/1991/52, A/46/156-E/1991/54, A/46/214-E/1991/77, A/46/308, 423, and 615; A/C.2/46/3 and 11)

(f) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT (A/46/3, 25, A/46/157-E/1991/55, A/46/268-E/1991/107 and Corr.1, and A/46/380-E/1991/142)

(g) HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (A/46/3, 8 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, and A/46/262-E/1991/96)

2. Mr. MANSFIELD (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme), reviewing the progress made in the 20 years since the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, said that conservation of the environment had become a vital goal and environment and development were viewed as intertwined, yet a number of serious problems persisted. New findings recently released about ozone layer depletion showed that its rate and scope were far worse than estimated. That crisis must be met with urgent action by Governments to accelerate the phasing-out of controlled substances under the amended Montreal Protocol on substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer in order to ensure that the London amendments would enter into force on time, and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) must also accelerate its research and assessment programmes. It was clear, however, that the lessons of the ozone layer crisis had not been learned. If action had been taken when scientists had first indicated, in 1972, that a problem existed, hastily pieced-together response strategies would be unnecessary.

3. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) represented an unprecedented opportunity to move away from reactive crisis management policies to forward-looking, deliberate and cooperative strategies based on costed commitments to action. UNEP was preparing reports for the Preparatory Committee for the Conference on issues including oceans and

coastal areas, international environmental law, toxic chemicals, hazardous wastes, and the protection of the marine environment from land-based sources of pollution. It had prepared a comprehensive report on desertification and was drafting reports of the Secretary-General on financing the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, the structure and responsiveness of the United Nations in dealing with major environmental issues, and follow-up to General Assembly resolutions 42/186 and 42/187 on sustainable development.

4. A state-of-the-environment report was also being drafted, with a profoundly disturbing message: ecological destruction was accelerating, and the window of opportunity for reversing that trend was closing. The type of human activity resulting in millions of tons of pollutants being spewed into the atmosphere must be halted. Many of the problems confronting the world - including deforestation, air and water pollution, population growth and desertification - had been understood well before the 1972 Stockholm Conference, while others - such as acid rain, proliferation of hazardous wastes and toxic chemicals, global warming and ozone layer depletion - were more recent. Although destruction of the environment was in fact by no means new and all the arguments had been heard before, not much had changed, except for the fact that now people demanded that action should be taken. They wanted to see clear commitments by the industrialized countries to accept their major responsibility for the deepening ecological crisis. They also wanted to see commitments by developing countries to pursue good housekeeping practices and to develop their capabilities for effective technology assessments, selection and contracting. And they wanted to see commitments by developing countries to leap-frog the destructive types of development of the past several decades.

5. The pivotal issues at the heart of the international environmental agenda - new and additional financial resources to developing countries, and technology transfer - must be squarely addressed. It was not a matter of aid or global philanthropy but of investing for survival. UNEP welcomed the statement by the European Community calling for new financing methods and suggesting the "polluter pays" principle, debt-for-nature swaps and accelerated technology transfer. The UNEP Governing Council had recognized the need for an objective means to facilitate the transfer of environmentally sound technologies to the poorest countries on terms favourable to them. It encouraged reforms in intellectual property rights and urged Governments to ensure that the rules of GATT were reformed to promote, not undermine, environmental protection. Despite the enormous challenges, real progress had begun with the establishment of the Interim Multilateral Ozone Fund and the Global Environment Facility.

6. Other events in 1991, however, underlined how much remained to be done. As the Iron Curtain had lifted, the full extent of the ecological catastrophe facing Eastern and Central Europe and the Soviet Union had become known. The Gulf war had revealed the failings of international accords to guarantee environmental protection. Following the hostilities, UNEP had coordinated an

(Mr. Mansfield)

inter-agency task force to provide technical assessments of environmental damage to the region.

7. Treaties were no guarantee of environmental protection and too often gave only a dangerous illusion of progress. The six treaties dealing with the environment in time of war had not been of much help when the war had erupted. Two permanent members of the Security Council had not yet ratified the 1977 Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Environmental Modification Techniques, and nearly three years after its adoption the Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal had not yet entered into force. He urged Governments to ratify existing treaties before the Conference on Environment and Development and to give environmental treaties the same force as disarmament accords, with on-site verification mechanisms and agreed targets and actions.

8. Sustainable development must be made a reality, and the costs of proposed action should be viewed in the light of the costs of inaction. It was important to know the cost of global warming, ozone layer depletion, poverty, pollution and resource degradation to future generations. Environmental resources essential to collective survival must also be valued in economic terms. Neither the success of the Conference nor Governments alone would save the planet. Governments must demonstrate leadership by example and agree to tougher regulations, market adjustments, international standards, economic reforms and clear commitments to action.

9. Mr. BRANNER (Director, United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office) said that the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of countries stricken by desertification and drought in Africa (A/46/268) reflected the effects of climate and desertification on water resources, agriculture, livestock production, food supply, land use, nutritional levels, and rural and national economies. Desertification affected the economic status and future prospects of most African countries, with varying degrees of severity. The report summarized major initiatives to redress the situation and contained conclusions and recommendations. The Secretary-General's report on implementation in the Sudano-Sahelian region of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification (A/46/380) summarized overall UNEP policies on and activities relating to desertification.

10. The overall picture emerging from those reports was not encouraging. Lack of both financial and human resources was a contributing factor, since the countries prone to desertification were among the poorest in the world and the assistance they had received had not been commensurate with their needs. A substantial transfer of resources in itself, however, would not be enough, since approaches to the problem of land degradation had not been effective. Planning and coordination was, therefore, another factor. It had been difficult to provide the social and physical environment that enabled and motivated the individual land user. Providing an enabling environment

required sufficient knowledge of the interplay between different production systems, the cause/effect of different land use and tenure systems, the consequences of different pricing systems and improved knowledge of the status of natural resource.

11. The UNCED process and its follow-up should lead to a better understanding of the links between poverty and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources. It should help countries with threatened resource bases to identify areas for internal action and lead to a better understanding of the resources required to reverse the process. In many cases, an effort now to conserve resources would be much less costly than future efforts after resources had been overexploited.

12. The United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office had contributed to significant progress in several areas. A process of harmonization among international organizations in support of development and implementation of strategic frameworks for the management of natural resources and the environment was under way. The concern for ecological and environmental monitoring was being addressed more appropriately through integrated environmental systems. Cooperation with the Sahara-Sahel Observatory had made it possible to produce the first comprehensive compilation of information monitoring the desertification process, covering some 20 countries. Progress had been made towards greater popular participation in natural resources management through better project design and a forward-looking programming approach. The Office hoped that the UNCED process would enhance those efforts and contribute to greater mobilization of the international community to address major problems.

13. Mr. RAMACHANDRAN (Executive Director, United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)) introduced the report of the Commission on Human Settlements on the work of its thirteenth session (A/46/8) and the second report of the Commission on the implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 (A/46/8/Add.1). He also referred to the report on living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory (A/46/262). That report focused on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/174, for which the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development was primarily responsible.

14. The thirteenth session of the Commission on Human Settlements, held in Harare, Zimbabwe from 29 April to 8 May 1991, had been extremely well attended. About 500 delegates representing 86 States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and United Nations bodies and agencies had participated, 24 of them at the ministerial level. One of the Commission's chief responsibilities was to coordinate the implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 at the intergovernmental level. To that end, the Commission had conducted a detailed review based on progress reports submitted by Governments and international agencies. While the situation in certain countries had improved, the fact remained that one fifth of the

(Mr. Ramachandran)

world's population lacked adequate shelter - and such factors as rising population, rapid urbanization and stagnating, or even diminishing economic capacity in many developing countries threatened to make matters worse. The Commission had therefore recommended to the General Assembly that a second United Nations conference on human settlements (Habitat II) should be held in 1996 or 1997 to mark the twentieth anniversary of the first Habitat Conference in Vancouver. That recommendation had been endorsed by the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session in July 1991.

15. The Commission had also conducted a review of two substantive themes. The first theme had been the significance of human settlements and the Global Strategy for the concept of sustainable development, with special emphasis on the relationship between economic development, improving the living conditions of the poor, and the management and planning of settlement. The second theme had been the use of energy by households, and in construction and in production of building materials, with emphasis on new, renewable and non-polluting energy sources.

16. The Commission had reviewed operational activities for development, shelter problems of populations affected by extreme poverty, the promotion of the advancement of women in human settlements development and management, and the strengthening of cooperation between the Centre and other bodies of the United Nations system, intergovernmental bodies outside the system and non-governmental organizations.

17. As the overall focus of the thirteenth session had been on the linkages between human settlements and sustainable development, the Commission had devoted a considerable amount of time to elaborating inputs for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. In an omnibus resolution addressing such topics as shelter, water supply, sanitation, waste management, energy, transportation and the use of environment-friendly building materials and construction technology, the Commission had urged the Conference to consider human settlements as both a distinct subject area and a cross-sectoral issue. Thus, at its third session, the Preparatory Committee for the Conference had indeed made human settlements a distinct programme under Agenda 21 and emphasized the human settlements aspects of other programme areas, such as land and freshwater resources management and the management of coastal zones. That move reflected the fact that human settlements constituted the living and working environment of all people. For example, energy consumption was concentrated in human settlements, making them a source of environmental degradation.

18. However, other development goals might also be furthered by increased attention to human settlements. Health, for example, would be vastly improved if solutions were found to overcrowded housing which lacked clean water and sanitation facilities. The construction of housing and infrastructure could be a major source of employment and income generation for semi-skilled and unskilled labour, thereby helping to eradicate poverty. The construction of

(Mr. Ramachandran)

shelter would also serve to alleviate the most classic manifestation of poverty - poor living conditions. Moreover, disaster mitigation and prevention measures could best be carried out in human settlements and within a human settlements framework. Lastly, there was a direct linkage between human settlements and education, the key to human resources development and capacity-building. Urban slums and impoverished rural communities were not conducive to learning. Children growing up in those environments had no quiet moment or quiet place for concentrated studying.

19. Paradoxically, important as human settlements were to practically every aspect of human endeavour, they did not receive sufficient attention from Governments. That was reflected in the comparatively low allocation of official development assistance to the sector. United Nations figures for 1990 showed that only 1.9 per cent of funding from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had been allocated to human settlements projects and programmes, and the figures for bilateral assistance told much the same story. None the less, while representing only 1.7 per cent of total UNDP expenditure in 1990, projects executed by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) (UNCHS Habitat)) had accounted for over 24.5 per cent of the total follow-up investment commitments. That was by far the highest rate of investment return per dollar of technical assistance among all UNDP-assisted development sectors.

20. "Enablement", "capacity-building" and "participation" were the keywords in the strategy for meeting the rising human settlements challenge. "Enablement" meant that Governments must serve as catalysts for the many, not the few. In that context, he welcomed the adoption of an enabling approach by an increasing number of developing countries as they implemented the Global Strategy. "Capacity-building" was particularly important in rapidly growing urban areas, where, increasingly, cities must plan, develop and administer in the place of central Governments. The importance of "participation", especially the participation of women, had been highlighted in the two decades since the Vancouver Conference.

21. The provision of adequate shelter for all - as proclaimed in the Global Strategy - was one action area designated by the Commission for priority consideration at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The theme gave recognition to the fact that the greatest environmental degradation in the world was suffered by the 1 billion people who lacked decent housing. Another action area was the provision of developmental and environmental infrastructure - water supply, sanitation, and waste disposal facilities. Yet another was the provision of affordable, environment-friendly energy-supply and transportation services. Other priority areas included the environmentally sound management of land resources; the environment-friendly development of the construction sector, using indigenous natural resources; human-resources and institutional capacity-building for environmentally sound settlements development; and management of human settlements and human settlement networks in a manner capable of reconciling developmental and environmental imperatives.

(Mr. Ramachandran)

22. In the course of the final decade of the twentieth century, considerable political will would be required to deal with major human settlements challenges, such as homelessness, even in industrialized countries; overpopulation of major cities in developing countries; a lack of even the most basic amenities in rural settlements; urban transportation; and the use of energy sources other than fuelwood in rural households.

23. Mr. VAN SCHAIK (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the States members of the European Community, referred to an earlier statement in the Second Committee by the Netherlands Minister for Development Cooperation on behalf of the European Community in which he had emphasized the importance of joint responsibility. That concept was certainly applicable to the issues of environment, desertification and drought, and human settlements. Environmental problems, for example, were often transboundary in nature and an area in which it was particularly important for the industrialized countries to set a good example. The many substantive decisions taken by the UNEP Governing Council at its sixteenth session illustrated the kind of concerted action that was needed. UNEP could make an effective contribution to the Conference on Environment and Development by providing it with substantive inputs. Strong input from UNEP and various United Nations bodies, combined with the political will of the negotiating parties, would be vital in ensuring that conventions on climate change and biological diversity were signed at the Conference. The state-of-the-environment report being prepared by UNEP might come as a shock to the world, for the report was expected to attest to continuing environmental degradation. It should provide an important scientific basis for measures to be decided at the Conference. The UNEP report on the implementation and financing of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification was expected to give fresh impetus to the struggle against desertification and drought. UNEP should work closely with the Conference secretariat in order to ensure consistency between the texts submitted to the UNEP Governing Council at its special session and to the Preparatory Committee for the Conference at its fourth session. In general, UNEP should strengthen its role in the fields of coordination, dissemination of information and research on desertification.

24. The European Community and its member States were firmly committed to supporting the struggle against desertification and drought, and welcomed the priority accorded to sustainable land use and to desertification and drought in the agenda of the Conference. They hoped that, in future, programmes to combat desertification would be more action-oriented. That, of course, would necessitate adequate financial resources. The activities of existing organizations such as the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office, the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and the Club du Sahel should be strengthened. The initiative to establish a Sahara-Sahel Observatory was interesting. Furthermore, the fact that desertification and drought were a priority item on the agenda of the current session of the General Assembly was to be welcomed and the Assembly should firmly support the UNEP Plan of Action to Combat Desertification.

(Mr. Van Schaik, Netherlands)

25. Desertification and drought must be viewed in the broader context of land degradation and its direct and indirect causes, which were of both a technical and a social and economic nature. Combating desertification must be an integral component of dryland development, planning and management of land resources, and strategies to deal with population pressure and poverty. Sustainable land use must be at the centre of any policy aimed at controlling desertification and increasing food production on land currently in production in developing countries, and should be applied to all forms of agriculture. Sustainable land use policies should balance energy, input, capital, fertilizers, pesticides and traditional technologies, and should be adapted to local circumstances.

26. In the area of human settlements, Governments must formulate comprehensive and enabling policies in order to deal with explosive urbanization - an issue which promised to be dominant in the twenty-first century. In that connection, the Global Strategy had been instrumental in bringing about a change in approach. The European Community and its member States supported the work of the Commission on Human Settlements and welcomed the outcome of its thirteenth session. They also appreciated its readiness to participate actively in the preparations for the Conference on Environment and Development. They noted with satisfaction that the issue of human settlements would be taken up separately in the UNCED preparatory process. Agenda 21 must promote the integration of environmental concerns in the human settlements policies of the Commission and other agencies, in the context of, inter alia, the UNCHS Habitat/World Bank/UNDP Urban Management Programme. The European Community and its member States welcomed the decisions to that effect by the Preparatory Committee at its third session and looked forward to the report which the Secretary-General of the Conference, in cooperation with the Executive Director of the Commission, would submit to the Preparatory Committee at its fourth session.

27. As human settlements promised to be a major issue in the 1990s and beyond, the European Community and its member States noted with interest the proposal for a conference in 1996 or 1997, 20 years after the initial Vancouver Conference on Human Settlements. Such a conference could provide an opportunity to review national and international trends in human settlements programmes, conduct a mid-term review of the implementation of the Global Strategy and elaborate recommendations for future action. The European Community and its member States looked forward to the report by the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Executive Director of the Commission, on the objectives, content and scope of the proposed conference that was to be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. They hoped that like the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly would endorse the Commission's report on its thirteenth session on the understanding that the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the Commission remained informal.

(Mr. Van Schaik, Netherlands)

28. In conclusion, he wished to inform the Second Committee that the European Community had recently taken a decision to end drift-net fishing with nets longer than 2.5 kilometres in Community waters and the high seas. The decision, which would take effect on 1 June 1992, would be applicable in the North-East Atlantic by the end of 1993 - unless it could be scientifically determined that there would be no risk to the environment - and would be implemented by legislation.

29. Ms. SAAD (Egypt) said that her delegation's views on the sub-items under discussion had been outlined in an earlier statement to the Committee. Her delegation attached great importance to the sub-items dealt with in recent days, especially the issue of the environment. The report of the UNEP Governing Council (A/46/25) covered all aspects of international cooperation in the field of environment, reflected the valuable contribution made, for example, by the Preparatory Committee for the Conference on Environment and Development and by the negotiations on climate change and biological diversity. The UNEP Governing Council would no doubt contribute further to the preparatory process at its special session in February 1992.

30. Mr. MARTI (Observer for the Holy See) said that the decision to convene the Conference on Environment and Development had been motivated by the need to counteract the threat to the environment and, at the same time, to address the just demands of developing countries for industrialized development. The attack on the environment took many forms, such as the pollution of land and seas with hazardous and toxic wastes, unsound agricultural, forestry and fishing practices, the uncontrolled destruction of animal life and reckless use of natural resources. In particular, the entire international community must take measures to halt the pollution of the atmosphere that sustained life on earth.

31. Since the beginning of the industrial revolution, mankind had been conducting a gigantic, uncontrolled experiment with the earth's atmosphere, which might already have changed irretrievably the future course of the planet. It had been predicted that the earth's temperature might increase up to 2 to 6 degrees centigrade by the middle of the next century, which left little time for effective countermeasures. Perhaps the most serious difficulty in countering man-made changes to the atmosphere lay in the fact that those changes were not an event, like the eruption of a volcano, but a slow process that people might tend to ignore.

32. The technological civilization enjoyed only by privileged nations and peoples posed a danger to the planet. The uncontrolled burning of fossil fuels released gases into the atmosphere that could increase the earth's temperature. Global warming could adversely affect agricultural production and might also induce a significant sea-level rise. The chloro-fluorocarbons released by industry rose into the stratosphere and were destroying the ozone layer over Antarctica. The flood of ultraviolet radiation let through the hole in the ozone layer damaged not only neighbouring countries but also marine life.

(Mr. Martino, Observer, Holy See)

33. Since no one nation or one particular generation was responsible for the damage to the environment, it was not the time to postulate that any one entity or nation should or could rectify it. The phenomenon was transnational and intergenerational, the first of its kind to affect humanity as a whole.

34. The implications of environmental degradation were global, and mankind must adopt radically new ways of thinking if it was to fulfil its role as steward of creation. In an interdependent environment, regional - and even national - considerations were outmoded notions. The current crisis required a new solidarity between the industrialized and the developing countries in order to ensure the rational use of resources and to promote a peaceful and healthy environment for all.

35. Mr. AL-AWADI (Kuwait) said that the grave environmental catastrophe in Kuwait demonstrated how insanity and destructiveness could jeopardize the future of humanity. In Kuwait, more than 700 burning oil wells were emitting toxic gases into the atmosphere, causing immediate and future health hazards. The outpouring of oil from wells had created huge lakes of oil that had destroyed the ground below their surface and had killed all forms of life that had existed in those areas. In addition, the millions of barrels of oil that had been poured into the sea had endangered marine life-cycles and had polluted beaches.

36. The mines and booby-traps and other munitions and ordnance used by the Iraqi occupiers had created other difficult, life-threatening problems. Hundreds of people had already suffered as a result of those dangerous materials. Even after the liberation of Kuwait, many Kuwaitis continued to fear that they might suffocate from the vast amount of smoke pouring into the atmosphere day and night. The Iraqi forces of aggression had further damaged the environment of Kuwait by digging hundreds of kilometres of trenches and pits and placing barbed wire and mines throughout the country.

37. The catastrophic state of the environment in Kuwait required a great deal of cooperation and coordinated action, and his delegation urged the international community to provide all possible means of assistance to help Kuwait deal with the consequences of the disaster. Efforts had already been undertaken by Kuwait and neighbouring countries whose environments had also been seriously damaged. Kuwait was grateful for the very well-coordinated efforts of United Nations agencies, in particular UNEP. The international community could continue to assist Kuwait by carrying out a detailed survey and assessment of damage, helping to prepare for the future effects of environmental pollution on human health, rehabilitating land polluted by oil, and assessing the damage to the marine environment and undertaking measures for its rehabilitation.

38. Mr. HADDAD (World Bank) said that, in recent years, the World Bank had stepped up its environmental activities. In fiscal year 1991, more than half of all World Bank loans had contained environment-related components.

(Mr. Haddad, World Bank)

Thirteen projects, totalling $1.6 billion and representing close to 7 per cent of total Bank lending for the year, had dealt primarily with environmental concerns.

39. The World Bank had supported the establishment of the Global Environment Facility and the related Interim Multilateral Ozone Fund in 1990. The purpose of the first three-year pilot stage was to support projects in developing countries that addressed four concerns: reducing global warming, preserving biological diversity, protecting international waters and preventing the further depletion of the ozone layer. Twenty-five countries from both the industrialized and the developing world had already committed $1.3 billion to the three-year initiative. Twenty-six investment and technical assistance projects, totalling over $250 million, had been submitted for review, and another $200 million work programme would be considered in December. Several projects were scheduled to be approved in the near future.

40. A cornerstone of the World Bank's environmental activities was its environmental assessment policy that required the assessment of all projects that might have a significant negative impact on the environment. Nearly half of all the Bank's loans approved in fiscal year 1991 had undergone either full or limited environmental assessment.

41. The World Bank had recently issued one policy paper on forestry and two directives. The policy paper represented the Bank's new approach to forest activities, which favoured more people-oriented and environmental initiatives. Lending for the protection and environmentally sound development of forests was expected to increase to over $400 million for fiscal years 1992 to 1995. The first operational directive was intended to minimize the need for resettlement and to ensure that, when resettlement was unavoidable, displaced persons would be adequately relocated. The second directive would ensure that indigenous people were not adversely affected by Bank projects.

42. A major aspect of the World Bank's environmental work in recent years had been its greater emphasis on overall policy measures that influenced behaviour. Research projects were being conducted in order to determine the effects of trade, fiscal and development policies on the environment, and numerous environmental action plans and sector-specific analyses of environmental issues were being completed. Policy and adjustment loans with an environmental focus were also being made.

43. While the World Bank's principal focus would continue to be on environmental problems at the local and national level in developing countries, increasing attention would be paid to the solution of global environmental issues. In order to carry out those activities, the Bank had expanded its environment staff to over 130 professionals. Further recruitment was anticipated, and internal procedures and policies were being reviewed and strengthened.

44. Mr. AJAVON (Togo) said that his delegation fully endorsed the views on sub-item (e) expressed by the representative of Ghana on behalf of the Group of 77.

45. The decision to convene the Conference on Environment and Development was most welcome, and demonstrated that the international community had finally acknowledged that poverty and the frightening pace of environmental degradation were as serious a threat to mankind as nuclear weapons. Rapid population growth and accelerating industrial production placed immeasurable pressures on the environment and the earth's resources, causing environmental degradation of many kinds.

46. His delegation was deeply concerned at that situation and welcomed efforts under way to elaborate national policies, strategies and plans for sustainable and ecologically sound development. It especially appreciated the work undertaken in that regard by organizations in the United Nations system, particularly by the World Bank, UNEP, UNDP, the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, the World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Preparatory Committee for the Conference on Environment and Development, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the World Health Organization and the World Meteorological Organization. His delegation agreed that attention should be focused on the major environmental problems identified by UNEP.

47. His country had been among those which had vigorously protested against the transboundary movement of hazardous and toxic wastes to countries lacking the technology to dispose of them, and had welcomed the signature of the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management within Africa of Hazardous Wastes.

48. His country's serious problems with coastal erosion and deforestation had led his Government to accord priority to environmental protection and establish a ministry of the environment. Reforestation activities had been initiated and an environmental code had been adopted to help protect animals and vegetation. Recognizing the value of preventive action, his Government particularly welcomed the UNEP recommendations calling for an increase in the collection, analysis and dissemination of scientific information and data concerning major ecological problems.

49. The fact that the Governments of poor developing countries faced serious difficulties in their attempt to convince their populations that some of their actions were environmentally harmful showed that poverty was both a cause and a consequence of environmental degradation. The efforts undertaken by States and the international community to deal with environmental problems pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 42/186, 42/187 and 44/227 were commendable. However, the developing countries must have sufficient financial resources to combat poverty before they could achieve environmental protection objectives. Concomitant action must be taken with respect to technology transfers and technical cooperation, particularly through training and research programmes.

(Mr. Ajavon, Togo)

Efforts to reduce poverty in the developing countries should focus on promoting food security and self-sufficiency, self-sufficiency with respect to energy, and access to primary health care and education. Appropriate action was also needed with regard to world trade and the indebtedness of the developing countries. Resources released as a result of disarmament should be used in the service of mankind, with a view to a more just and balanced economic order which made man the focus of attention.

50. Mr. VALENZUELA (Honduras), speaking on behalf of his own delegation and those of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama, underscored their concern at the worsening economic conditions in the developing countries which, along with increased population growth and rapid urbanization, had compounded housing shortages, causing serious social, economic and environmental problems.

51. The Vancouver Conference on Human Settlements, held in 1976, had been the point of departure for multilateral action to confront the housing shortage and meet the basic needs of families. The adoption of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 by the General Assembly at its forty-third session had been one of the major contributions in that field. Technical cooperation activities focusing on housing had increased significantly during the past six years, with support from UNDP trust funds and UNCHS (Habitat) and contributions from interested Governments. In Latin America, a wide range of housing-related issues was being addressed in 46 projects under way in 14 countries, which were being implemented with assistance from UNCHS (Habitat) in cooperation with UNDP, the World Bank and Governments of States members of the European Community. The Central American countries supported the "sustainable cities" project under way in 15 cities in Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America to study housing strategies and deal with uncontrolled population growth.

52. They also welcomed the human settlements training activities financed by the World Bank and the European Economic Community. A number of Central American countries had declared housing construction a national priority, and they welcomed the active support of international institutions for their efforts. Programmes relating to human settlements focused not only on areas on the periphery of major cities, but also on housing construction in rural areas, complemented by the required public services and infrastructure projects.

53. The consolidation of democracy in Central America was fostering cooperation among the Governments of the region in confronting the social problems of their populations. They approached the housing shortage from a broad perspective, recognizing that in addition to shelter, it was important to provide, for example, potable water, electricity, health care, education and infrastructure.

(Mr. Valenzuela, Honduras)

54. Another successful project in Central America entailed the construction of rural housing by the future occupants themselves, organized by farmers' cooperatives. The project was a model which had attracted interest in countries outside the region and was supported by international organizations and the United Nations. Governments in Central America had made structural adjustments in their economies to deal with their serious economic problems, and the populations affected by those measures received assistance in integrated programmes which addressed social investment, housing and environmental needs. At their tenth summit meeting in July, the Presidents of the Central American countries had decided to establish a Central American council on housing and human settlements in order to coordinate efforts in the region, in close cooperation with social service institutions.

55. In conclusion, he expressed appreciation to the European Community and the organizations in the United Nations system - particularly UNDP, UNEP, the United Nations Population Fund, UNCHS (Habitat) and the World Bank - for their contribution to the region's national housing programmes.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

Official Records

SECOND COMMITTEE
49th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 20 November 1991
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 49th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. BURKE (Ireland)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 77: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (PART V) (continued)

(e) ENVIRONMENT

(f) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT

(g) HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

This record is subject to correction.
Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.2/46/SR.49
12 December 1991
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

91-57541 5490S (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 77: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (PART V) (continued)

(e) ENVIRONMENT (A/46/3, A/46/25, A/46/138-E/1991/52, A/46/156-E/1991/54, A/46/214-E/1991/77, A/46/308, 423 and 615, A/C.2/46/3 and 11, A/C.2/46/L.7 and L.9)

(f) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT (A/46/3, A/46/25, A/46/157-E/1991/55, A/46/268-E/1991/107 and Corr.1, A/46/380-E/1991/142)

(g) HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (A/46/3, A/46/8 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, A/46/262-E/1991/96)

1. Mr. KJELLEN (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), at its sixteenth session, had adopted several important decisions concerning the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The Nordic countries, in their statement on agenda item 78, had already commented on some of those decisions, for example, on oceans and coastal areas, sea-level rise and freshwater resources, transfer of technology and integration of environment and development in UNEP.

2. The Nordic countries had welcomed the expert meetings, organized by UNEP in support of the Conference, on land-based sources of marine pollution, toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes. Those meetings should fill gaps in the Conference preparations and would increase the relevance of decisions taken in those areas by the Conference. They also welcomed the decision to establish a centre for urgent environmental assistance on an experimental basis.

3. The Nordic countries, as stated in their intervention on item 78, had urged UNEP to increase its contribution to the Conference preparatory process. They hoped that the UNEP Governing Council, at its special session in February 1992, would discuss the state-of-the-environment report, the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, the consolidated report on follow-up activities and the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Such a discussion would provide valuable and timely input to UNCED.

4. With regard to human settlements, the Nordic countries had taken note of the positive outcome of the thirteenth session of the Commission on Human Settlements at Harare. One of the major items on its agenda had been human settlements and the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 in the context of sustainable development and the contribution of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) to the Conference. They were satisfied with the resolution adopted on that issue, which adequately reflected the importance of human settlements and urbanization for environmentally sound and

(Mr. Kjellen, Sweden)

sustainable development, as well as the vital role which Habitat could and should play in that area, including its contribution to the Conference.

5. With respect to desertification, he also spoke as the Chairman of Working Group I of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference. The issue of desertification should continue to be one of the principal concerns of the international community within the field of environment and development. The documents before the Committee told of long and strenuous effort by the international community to combat desertification and the successes and failures, reflecting the extreme complexity of its climatic, social and economic factors. They also indicated that many intergovernmental schemes were under way, which were difficult to coordinate.

6. The UNEP Governing Council, at its sixteenth session, had stressed the need to refine the definition of the concept of desertification, taking into account recent findings about the influence of climate fluctuations. At the third session of the Preparatory Committee, reference had been made to that decision and the hope expressed that UNEP would cooperate fully with the Conference secretariat so that the fourth meeting of the Preparatory Committee would be fully prepared. The Nordic countries viewed as essential coordination of Agenda 21 and the report on the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification which the Governing Council would consider at its third special session. It was particularly important to seize the opportunity offered by the Conference to make decisive progress towards more efficient international action to fight desertification, in particular through reforestation.

7. Desertification was a problem in many parts of the world, but its consequences were especially serious in Africa, whose fragile ecosystems, drought and particularly difficult economic conditions combined to cause unsustainable land use and continued desertification in a vicious circle. The work carried out by the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office in that area was praiseworthy. Governments of the affected countries were mainly responsible for facing the situation, but it had already been recognized that the international community had a special responsibility for development in Africa. That joint effort must be sustained, and the issue of desertification took on symbolic value as the Rio Conference approached.

8. Recognizing that, the Preparatory Committee had decided that Working Group I would take up desertification as its first issue during the fourth session. On behalf of the Nordic countries, and in his capacity as Chairman of the Working Group, he said that no effort would be spared to contribute to a constructive discussion at the Preparatory Committee and the adoption of concrete decisions at the Conference.

9. Mr. BELL (Canada) said that, as a country whose economy relied heavily on natural resource exploitation, but at the same time had a largely urban population, Canada had learned that no development could be sustainable in the

(Mr. Bell, Canada)

long term unless resources were conserved for future generations and unless urban growth was managed.

10. Canada had been pleased by the results of the sixteenth session of the UNEP Governing Council. Among the issues discussed, one of particular concern to Canada was the protection of the marine environment. Canada had played a leading role in negotiating the decision to hold a meeting to formulate a draft strategy, including a programme of action to reduce land-based sources of marine pollution. The results of the meeting would be reported to the Preparatory Committee at its fourth session and were intended to form a substantive part of the oceans section of Agenda 21.

11. With regard to other decisions taken by the UNEP Governing Council, Canada supported the decision to establish a United Nations centre for urgent environmental assistance on an 18-month trial basis. In the view of his delegation, the lists of equipment and rosters of experts available to respond to man-made environmental emergencies would be crucial in ensuring that such disasters were dealt with quickly. Canada looked forward to reviewing the results at the next regular session of the Governing Council. On climate change, Canada supported the efforts to coordinate the work of the forums dealing with that issue with a view to ensuring continuing institutional cooperation to achieve positive results.

12. Human settlements were essential factors in the sustainable development equation, as they provided a focus for dealing with many of the symptoms of the global environment and development crisis, such as climate change, soil erosion and the pollution of oceans and fresh water; they played a pivotal role in the implementation of environmental policies and programmes. Canada had been a strong supporter of human settlement issues as early as the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held at Stockholm and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements held at Vancouver and believed that the link between human settlements must be strengthened.

13. His delegation welcomed the results achieved by the Commission on Human Settlements, in particular its constructive deliberations on the linkages between human settlements and sustainable development. During its third session, the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had decided that human settlements would be treated as a separate area in the Agenda 21, and that the highest priority should be given to the urban environment within that programme. Canada had supported that decision strongly. Urbanization would be a dominant phenomenon in the twenty-first century and institutional capacities must be put in place to address effectively the accompanying social, economic and environmental pressures.

14. Over the past few months, two major international events focusing on the role of cities and sustainable development had taken place in Canada: the World Cities and the Environment Congress, held at Toronto, and the Third

(Mr. Bell, Canada)

Summit Conference of Major Cities of the World, held at Montreal. Canada had also co-sponsored a five-city consultation project as part of the Urban Management Programme which was being implemented jointly by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the World Bank and Habitat.

15. To date, Habitat and the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had pursued consultations for the development of the human settlements programme, while taking into account the summary of views submitted by Member States. Equally important were the consultations with other United Nations agencies and with international organizations actively involved in that area, such as UNEP, the World Bank, UNDP, representatives of all levels of government and relevant independent sector organizations. Canada believed that that component of the preparatory process of the Conference should be strengthened, thereby allowing relevant organizations to share information.

16. In addition to the human settlements aspect of Agenda 21, other programme areas, such as fresh water, waste management, poverty and health would also reflect issues of concern to human settlements and the urban environment and it was equally important that those areas should be identified.

17. Canada recognized that the problems of desertification and drought represented a central issue which was of particular concern to the African countries of the Sahel. The report of the Secretary-General on desertification and drought in the region was excellent and the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification remained a valid strategy, although progress on implementation was slow. His delegation therefore urged UNEP to redouble its efforts to support the imp ementation of the Plan of Action.

18. His delegation fully supported the decision on desertification and drought adopted by the Preparatory Committee at its third session and hoped that detailed proposals on the issue would be developed for inclusion in Agenda 21; those proposals could be discussed at the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee.

19. His delegation commended the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office for its excellent work at the community, national and regional levels to combat desertification and urged the General Assembly to continue its support for that important agency.

20. Mr. WU Hailong (China) said that desertification and the related problem of drought remained serious issues for many countries, particularly the developing countries, and were causing great concern in the international community. The General Assembly had considered the item on numerous occasions, for example at the United Nations Conference on Desertification, held in 1977, at which the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification had been adopted. Since then the relevant organs of the United Nations and other related international and regional organizations had been doing beneficial

(Mr. Wu Hailong, China)

work; for their part, developing countries affected by desertification were making unremitting efforts to combat desertification and, thanks to the assistance of the international community, they had achieved some positive results in halting the spread of desertification.

21. Nevertheless, according to statistics of the relevant United Nations organs, the problem in a number of the areas affected by desertification, far from being reduced, had increased. It was essential to undertake comprehensive research on desertification and to formulate more effective policy measures with a view to obtaining better results. In order to do that, more attention must be paid to two issues. The first was that desertification was not an isolated problem; it could not be separated from socio-economic, population and ecological problems and accordingly it could not be resolved as if it were only an ecological problem. In the case of many developing countries which were victims of desertification, the problem was closely related to their economic underdevelopment. Poverty and underdevelopment had compelled those countries to depend on excessive acquisitions from nature at the expense of serious damage to the environment. Accordingly, those countries had found themselves caught in a vicious cycle of poverty, excessive population growth and continuous deterioration of the environment. The fundamental solution therefore involved the creation of an international economic environment that was conducive to development so that those countries could ensure economic growth, eradicate poverty and ease the pressure on the environment. Second, increased international assistance should be provided to those countries in their stuggle against desertification and drought. It was true that the international community and relevant organizations had done a great deal of useful work but, bearing in mind the seriousness of the problem and the magnitude of the financial resources required for its solution, it was clear that far more should be done. Many developing countries were struggling against desertification under unfavourable conditions and hard economic pressures, so that it was only natural that the international community should provide more assistance on preferential terms.

22. Mr. AL-UKLEH (United Arab Emirates) said that the resources available to mankind were limited and that life on Earth would be threatened if appropriate measures were not taken. All countries accordingly shared a responsibility: the industrialized countries must modify their consumption habits and the developing countries must solve their problems. Among ecological measures which should be adopted, it was important to limit the emission of gases affecting the ozone layer. The United Arab Emirates considered that the preservation of the environment was a task of fundamental importance for mankind and his delegation accordingly welcomed the largest conference ever held to solve the problem of pollution in the Gulf. That conference had urged that measures should be taken to avoid the dangers which threatened the ecology of the region and would guarantee to all a life of dignity without threatening the environment.

(Mr. Al-Ukleh, United Arab Emirates)

23. The Gulf Cooperation Council had stressed the destructive effects of oil spills in the sea, which were threatening marine life, not only in the Gulf, but in other regions as well. The oil-well fires in Kuwait demonstrated why the methodology had to be changed. Those criminal acts showed that environmental disasters did not affect individual countries, but entire regions. Studies should be conducted to determine the extent of the disaster in the region; however the countries of the region lacked the necessary resources to carry out such studies, making international assistance necessary, especially from United Nations agencies. It was also necessary to implement new environmental conservation programmes, as the United Arab Emirates had requested. There were many threats to the environment, and the relationship between environment and development was making itself felt throughout the world, pointing up the uselessness of national frontiers in such matters. While the developing countries should concentrate on attaining economic development, that should not serve as a pretext for neglecting environmental protection. He hoped that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, to be held in June 1992, would lead to practical action on all those problems, which affected the North as well as the South.

24. Mr. RAICHEV (Bulgaria) said that the discussions on agenda items 78 and 79 had demonstrated that environmental problems were among the most pressing issues the international community had to resolve if it was to achieve sustainable development. Bulgaria attached great importance to enhancing the efficiency of UNEP and its Governing Council. With regard to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the results achieved thus far by the Preparatory Committee were satisfactory, and it was to be hoped that optimum use would be made of the time remaining to reach general agreement on all questions before the Committee. Many problems had arisen in that area, and their solution was of decisive importance for ensuring the ecological balance of the planet. His delegation was convinced that the Conference must achieve specific results on all the issues mentioned in General Assembly resolution 44/228. It fully supported the proposals concerning the preparation and signing at the Conference of a convention on climate change and a convention on biological diversity and for achieving consensus on the basic principles and instruments for the preservation and development of forests and forest ecosystems. Bulgaria was also particularly interested in the preservation of the ozone layer, the elimination of hazardous waste, the protection of the seas and oceans, the development of coastal zones, transboundary watercourses and other issues.

25. The Conference should promote the integration of environmental considerations into the economic development of all countries, in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. Efficient mechanisms should also be developed for the implementation of existing conventions. The Conference should allocate a prominent role to the promotion of regional cooperation in solving global environmental problems.

(Mr. Raichev, Bulgaria)

26. Bulgaria welcomed the prospects for promoting regional cooperation in Europe and fully supported the protection of the Danube and the Black Sea, as well as the promotion of environmental cooperation with its neighbours. It attached special importance in that regard to the conclusions of the "Environment for Europe" Conference held in Czechoslovakia in June 1991. Bulgaria remained firmly committed to the implementation of the principles and objectives set forth in the document of that Conference and in the Bergen Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Development in the ECE Region.

27. The environmental situation in Bulgaria was very serious and, in may regions, even critical. An environmental protection act had recently been passed which would form the basis of Bulgaria's environmental policy. The country did not, however, have a national environmental protection programme and lacked the information systems and modern set of standards necessary to stimulate the development of non-polluting industries. The process of democratization in Bulgaria would make it possible to discuss those issues freely, thereby enabling society to press for their solution. At the same time, the current economic situation prevented any solution of environmental problems, making them a source of tension and social conflicts instead. It would be very difficult to solve those problems without the help of the international community. Furthermore, Bulgaria urgently required assistance in developing its own environmental policy in the transition to a market economy. That was particularly true in the case of efforts to guarantee the safety of nuclear installations, an issue which had yet to be satisfactorily resolved.

28. The formulation of an effective national environmental policy was a prerequesite for steady and inflation-resistant economic growth. Bulgaria was convinced that those goals could be achieved with the introduction of market mechanisms.

29. His delegation believed that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development should devote more attention to the grave environmental problems facing the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which in many respects were worse than those of other regions. The current reforms under way there and the integration of those countries in the world economy would help strengthen the world economic system and invigorate world trade.

30. Bulgaria was actively participating in United Nations activities in the area of human settlements. Noting the Habitat report and plan of action for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, he reminded the Committee that those countries needed assistance, particularly while they were developing new systems of housing finance and credit. He had the impression, however, that the Habitat report had not covered all countries in the region equally. Consequently, he proposed that the human settlements and housing situation should once again be studied closely and that uniform criteria should be applied to each country in order to identify the areas on which international cooperation through the Commission on Human Settlements and Habitat would be required.

31. Mr. KERDPHOL (Thailand) said that the nations of the world had only one common heritage: the environment. Natural resources were limited, and most of them were not renewable. The problems currently facing the world could become the crises of the future if they were not resolved.

32. Two decades had passed since the King of Thailand had initiated crop-substitution projects to turn the hill tribes away from their traditional shifting-cultivation practices and the Queen had set up an impressive wildlife conservation project. There were currently more than 1,000 projects initiated by the King and Queen under way in the country.

33. As a developing country, Thailand was doing its part to preserve the natural environment. Some 16 years previously, it had set up a national environmental board and the Government had adopted legislation on wildlife preservation which provided for the creation of sanctuaries and regulated the administration of public parks. The rapid decrease in certain marine resources, particularly coral and the sea turtle, had prompted the adoption of a decree prohibiting the use of those resources for commercial gain. The Ministry of Education was currently working on a national environmental education strategy, aimed at all levels of education, and the Ministry of the Interior had delegated to the provinces responsibility for the management of their own resources. All logging concessions had been banned and severe penalties set for those found exploiting wildlife.

34. Thailand had set itself three primary goals in its most recent economic and social development plan: first, to improve its organizations and laws to ensure an administration conducive to environmental development; second, to mobilize investments in order to lessen pollution; and third, to establish a natural resources system that would be used in the planning process and permit the proper demarcation of forest and coastal areas for conservation purposes.

35. With regard to the issue of large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing, Thailand supported General Assembly resolution 44/225 and noted that it had never permitted its own fishing fleets to use such nets. The Thai fishing industry was, however, seriously threatened by the restrictions imposed on such fishing. The country had regulations prohibiting the canning of products obtained by fishing with large-scale pelagic drift-nets, and many factories refused to buy tuna caught with any type of drift-net. That restriction had led to a sharp drop in the fishing fleet's profits, forcing many vessels to cease operations altogether. That showed the indirect repercussions that an international prohibition could have on a country's economy, and his delegation therefore wished to have a detailed study carried out on the direct and indirect effects of the ban on large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing.

36. As Princess Chulabhorn had said to the UNEP Governing Council, the environment could only be preserved if those concerned with the problem had a profound conviction of principles.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

Official Records

SECOND COMMITTEE
50th meeting
held on
Thursday, 21 November 1991
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 50th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. BURKE (Ireland)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 82: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 77: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

(e) ENVIRONMENT (continued)

(f) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT (continued)

(g) HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 84: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)

(b) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE (continued)

This record is subject to correction.
Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

91-57570 5380S (E)

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.2/46/SR.50
2 December 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

/...

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 82: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued)
(A/C.2/46/L.47)

1. Mr. SOUMPHOLPHAKDY (Lao People's Democratic Republic) announced that his delegation wished to withdraw its sponsorship of draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.47.

AGENDA ITEM 77: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

(e) ENVIRONMENT (continued) (A/46/3 and 25, A/46/138-E/1991/52, A/46/156-E/1991/54, A/46/214-E/1991/77, A/46/308, 423 and 615; A/C.2/46/3, 11, 13 and 14)

(f) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT (continued) (A/46/3 and 25, A/46/157-E/1991/55, A/46/268-E/1991/107 and Corr.1 and A/46/380-E/1991/142)

(g) HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (continued) (A/46/3, 8 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, and A/46/262-E/1991/95)

2. Mr. GOUDIMA (Ukraine) said that the world was on the brink of an environmental catastrophe and concerted efforts were required by all States to save the future of the planet. In view of the particular role of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in that undertaking, Ukraine welcomed the significant progress made by UNEP as the catalyzing, coordinating and mobilizing organization in the United Nations system in the environmental sphere.

3. Ukraine shared the opinion of many other delegations that optimal use should be made of UNEP in promoting the success of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and that UNEP should work in close cooperation with the Preparatory Committee and the secretariat of UNCED.

4. Ukraine welcomed UNEP Governing Council decision 16/9 on the establishment on an experimental basis, of a centre for urgent environmental assistance, as the importance of such a centre had been underscored by the environmental emergencies in the Persian Gulf, the consequences of the Chernobyl accident and natural disasters elsewhere in the world. The centre could be tasked with the compilation of a register of the world's most hazardous industrial installations. Ukraine had gained useful experience from the tragic Chernobyl disaster which could benefit the Centre: technical methods of environmental monitoring had been elaborated and the numerous highly qualified experts in the country could be seconded to the centre's projects. Ukraine similarly welcomed decision 16/10 on the contribution by UNEP to international cooperation on the consequences of the Chernobyl accident. Collective efforts and appropriate national policies were required to ensure the effectiveness of those decisions. Specific measures had been

(Mr. Goudima, Ukraine)

adopted in the Ukraine to restructure and upgrade the entire environmental protection system and appropriate new legislation had been adopted in that area. Provision had been made for environment-related international instruments to which Ukraine might become party to have precedence over any domestic legislation in the same area. Public organizations, such as the environmental action group "Green World" were playing an increasingly important role in environmental monitoring.

5. Turning to agenda item 78 (f), he said that Ukraine fully supported the recommendations on increased international cooperation to combat desertification and drought contained in the Secretary-General's report in document A/46/380. Ukraine similarly commended the Commission on Human Settlements on the activities described in its report A/46/8.

6. Mr. PEREIRA (Cape Verde) said that issues relating to drought and desertification should be tackled with renewed impetus, in view of the disastrous consequences of those phenomena for affected populations and their impact on the global environment. While some progress had been made in addressing those issues, much remained to be done, and resources to combat desertification must be increased substantially. The Conference on Environment and Development would provide an opportunity for the international community to tackle desertification problems in a consistent, thorough and coordinated manner.

7. Since attaining independence, his country, which was located at the centre of the Sahelian belt and was seriously affected by recurrent drought and desertification, had mobilized to reverse the desertification process through reforestation and by increasing agricultural production and improving the water supply. While much had been achieved as a result of those efforts, particularly with respect to reforestation, much remained to be done before the results could be considered satisfactory. He expressed his delegation's appreciation for the technical and financial support it had received from various sources.

8. Mr. IMANALIEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the potential of UNEP in helping Member States solve their environmental problems was far from exhausted. A recent report on the state of the environment in the USSR had painted a disturbing picture of such problems as Chernobyl, the state of the country's seas, lakes and rivers and conditions in many industrial centres and regions. A national strategy on environmental issues was under consideration, but many of those problems were of a severity that required efforts possible only at an international level. For that reason, the USSR attached great importance to international cooperation in environmental work, such as the current USSR-UNEP project to restore the environment of the Aral region, whose destruction had direct consequences for the health, economic development and very survival of more than 30 million people. He also drew attention to recent proposals submitted to the General Assembly at its current session by the Government of Uzbekistan on further cooperative measures to address that problem.

(Mr. Imanaliev, USSR)

9. The USSR set great store by the establishment of a centre for urgent environmental assistance and has submitted a list of Soviet scientists whose expertise could be made available to the centre, for the benefit of all States. The USSR hoped that other countries with experience in dealing with the consequences of man-made environmental disasters would also take an interest in the centre. The establishment of the centre at the earliest possible date would considerably advance the objectives of General Assembly resolution 44/224 on international cooperation in dealing with environmental emergencies.

10. The USSR was convinced that effective international and national environmental programmes would only be possible on the basis of strong cooperation between Governments, public bodies and business and scientific circles and it therefore urged all States to give active support to national non-governmental organizations and business associations concerned with environmental issues.

11. In conclusion, he commended the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) (UNCHS (Habitat)) for its valuable work and, in particular, for its contribution to international cooperation in mitigating the consequences of the Chernobyl accident.

12. Mr. JOUNA (Niger) said that his delegation fully endorsed the views expressed by the representative of Ghana on behalf of the Group of 77 with respect to agenda item 77. The economic problems which had plagued the developing countries, and African countries in particular, during the past decade could be ascribed in part to environmental management problems and natural disasters, including drought and desertification. Environmental degradation was particularly severe in his country, more than half of which was desert land. The serious economic difficulties of the Niger's rural economy were compounded by desertification, climate changes and water supply problems, characterized by the decreased fertility of land, crop shortfalls, barren pasturelands, deforestation and the decline of biological diversity.

13. His country was determined to continue its struggle to halt desert encroachment. A national desertification control plan had been worked out in accordance with regional guidelines established at meetings organized by the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel. The plan recognized the inextricable link between environmental protection and the well-being of man, as well as the need for a broad, integrated approach to natural resources management. His delegation expressed appreciation for the assistance his country had already received and looked forward to further effective support. His country would continue to participate actively in organizations concerned with environmental protection and desertification and hoped that the Conference on Environment and Development would make a definitive contribution to the world's environmental protection efforts.

14. Mr. LEV (Israel) said that efforts must be intensified to eradicate desertification and welcomed the fact that the issue would be dealt with at the Conference on Environment and Development. Advances in science and

(Mr. Lev, Israel)

technology should be utilized to convert arid zones into habitable and productive areas. His own country's continued development and well-being depended on its ability to revitalize the desert, which accounted for almost two thirds of its land area.

15. Two guidelines served as the basis for Israel's approach to the issue: firstly, it was necessary to understand the desert and the desertification process and, secondly, the process of desertification must be tackled through a general strategy to reverse the process, rather than with defensive actions. His country was prepared to share the experience and know-how it had gained through its research and development efforts in respect of arid zones and the conversion of the desert to a productive environment.

16. The process of desertification could be reversed by turning large areas which in earlier eras had been fertile regions back into fertile land, an undertaking which, if carried out wisely, would benefit man without harming nature. An international plan was needed to settle people in the desert for the purpose of stopping desertification.

17. Mr. AL-HOSNI (Oman) said that his country sought to protect the environment in accordance with scientifically sound criteria, and the Ministry for the Environment and the Council for Environmental Protection and Pollution Control were very active in that effort.

18. Oman, which had more than 115 medium and heavy industries, had adopted appropriate environmental protection and pollution control legislation. Moreover, with waters rich in marine life and a coastline of some 1,700 kilometres long, his country recognized the importance of protecting its marine environment and had adopted legislation to control the dumping of hazardous waste and toxic substances.

19. Efforts to promote environmental awareness in the schools and to encourage afforestation and proper household sanitation were further examples of his country's concern for the environment. The importance of protecting the environment from transboundary pollution had been vividly demonstrated by the air pollution generated in his country by oil fires set during the Persian Gulf war.

20. His country would send a high-level delegation to the Conference on Environment and Development and it proposed the establishment of an international body to protect the environment.

21. Mr. CAMARA (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), noting that agriculture was both the cause of environmental problems and their victim, said that it would be critical at the Conference and in follow-up undertakings to recognize that sustainable development required a concerted approach to the closely related issues of environment, agriculture, industry, energy and trade.

(Mr. Camara, FAO)

22. In cooperation with the Netherlands Government, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) had organized a Conference on Agriculture and the Environment in April 1991 which had paved the way for international cooperation to promote sustainable agriculture and rural development. Sustainable agriculture and rural development had been defined by FAO as the management and conservation of the natural resources base, and the orientation of technological and institutional change in such a manner as to ensure the attainment and continued satisfaction of human needs for present and future generations. Such sustainable development (in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors) conserved land, water and plant and animal genetic resources, and was environmentally non-degrading, technically appropriate, economically viable and socially acceptable. In identifying the features of a global common strategy and plan of action to promote sustainable agriculture and rural development, the Conference had acknowledged the vast diversity of ecological, cultural, social and economic conditions which affected agricultural practices throughout the world and had recognized that the purpose of agriculture was, first and foremost, to ensure food security for all, and to provide employment opportunities, improved living conditions and income security in rural areas.

23. At its ninety-ninth session, the Council of FAO had endorsed the recommendation by the Conference that it develop, with the support of and in close cooperation with other appropriate United Nations organizations, an international cooperative programme framework to assist in matters relating to sustainable agriculture and rural development. Strategies and proposals for action should take into account the need to promote ecologically viable agricultural practices in the industrialized world; ways to finance and share the costs of sustainable agriculture and rural development; and the need to elaborate guidelines and other tools to help countries formulate appropriate policies and plans before the investment stage. FAO was working closely with the Secretary-General of UNCED on those issues.

24. FAO considered desertification a form of land degradation. A Special Action Programme on Conservation and Rehabilitation of African lands had been launched in 1991. At the national level, the Programme called for the adoption of improved soil utilization techniques by encouraging the involvement of users, and envisaged the establishment of the required institutional structure. At the regional level, the Programme envisaged the establishment of information networks, cooperation among countries in research programmes and the establishment of subregional training services. Country-specific programmes were a key feature of the plan. Preliminary activities were already under way in five African countries and similar programmes would be introduced in the coming years in Asia and Latin America.

25. Some 184 FAO projects in 32 countries focused on various aspects of desertification. To ensure that such projects were based on a sound knowledge of the physical environment and of the scope and state of agricultural resources, FAO continued to support activities relating to data collection and

(Mr. Camara, FAO)

the evaluation of the potential and state of land, in close cooperation with UNEP, the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) and the International Society of Soil Science. FAO also worked with national institutions to devise and implement more productive and durable land use methods.

26. In conclusion, he said that FAO looked forward to cooperating with government authorities, organizations in the United Nations system, donors, non-governmental organizations and rural collectives and households in the fight against desertification, with a view to ensuring sustainable agriculture and rural development.

27. Mr. ESTRADA OYUELA (Argentina) said that his Government was deeply concerned about the spread of desertification and he noted with regret the lack of progress in international efforts to combat desertification. The Consultative Group for Desertification Control had proved ineffective and appeared to be still searching for its proper function. Desertification was a universal problem, for its causes were closely linked with agricultural methods practised throughout the world.

28. Agriculture was the privileged pursuit of only one species on the planet and it was essential that it should be practised in a sustainable manner, consistent with the laws of nature and the balance of the environment. Intensive farming methods that went hand in hand with protectionist agricultural policies were not only inefficient, they had severe environmental consequences and led to desertification. The implementation of such policies in some countries and, in particular, the implementation of a common agricultural policy, prompted otherwise efficient agricultural producers in other countries to adopt non-sustainable farming methods to compensate for the commercial losses that they suffered through the application of heavy agricultural subsidies. Such subsidies burdened the taxpayer, penalized the consumer and had serious consequences for the environment, causing the disappearance of species, contamination of water and an increase in nitrogen and ammonia levels.

29. In Argentina, such practices had led to a deterioration of the soil and affected not only arid and semi-arid zones, but even areas whose agricultural potential was among the highest in the world. Competition had caused the rejection of crop rotation in favour of intensive farming methods aimed at super-production, which damaged the fragile ecosystem of the soil.

30. His delegation therefore believed that a close scientific study of the problem was required, with an analysis of its environmental impact. The Secretary-General, in cooperation with FAO and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), could make recommendations to the international community on the necessary corrective measures. Such a study should take into consideration the protectionist agricultural policies of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), implemented at an approximate annual cost of $300 billion, and the pressures which excess

(Mr. Estrada Oyuela, Argentina)

agricultural production placed on efficient producers in the developing countries to abandon traditional food crops in favour of non-sustainable cash crops, leading to the deterioration of the soil and the spread of desertification.

31. He suggested that cooperation programmes should be adopted to promote sustainable agricultural development by improving access to markets and ensuring fair prices for agricultural produce. Such programmes would be conducive to economic growth and sustainable development in producer countries, particularly in the developing countries. In view of the important link between the issue of desertification and the question of economic growth and development, Argentina urged its inclusion in Agenda 21.

32. Argentina was concerned about over-fishing. The General Assembly had adopted appropriate protection measures, particularly with regard to the Pacific, and Argentina would endeavour to ensure the implementation of those measures in the South Atlantic. It was necessary to identify the sustainability of the world's living marine resources and to study the consequences of further exploitation for their biological diversity, for the marine environment and, in the case of Argentina, for the economic and social life of the fishing communities whose livelihood depended upon them.

33. Lastly, he noted that the issue of human settlements had still not been approached by the United Nations in a fully integrated manner. In particular, it was necessary to study the problems caused by the overpopulation of urban areas in all their aspects, namely, with regard to transport, services, housing, the placement of industries and the economic growth rate necessary to generate development policies compatible with an adequate distribution of income. The issue of human settlements should be given high priority in the future work of the Organization, and Argentina was willing to contribute to that endeavour.

34. Mr. INCER BARQUERO (Nicaragua), speaking on behalf of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama and Nicaragua, said that his statement would complement earlier remarks made by the Guatemalan representative.

35. Latin America and the Caribbean had vast natural resources, varied ecosystems and great human potential, all of which were unexploited for lack of sufficient financial resources. With only 8 per cent of the world's population, the region had 23 per cent of the world's potentially arable land, 29 per cent of its farmland, 31 per cent of its usable surface waters and 46 per cent of its tropical forests.

36. However, the difficult economic situation in Latin America - aggravated by external debt, inflation, lack of investment, unfavourable terms of trade and growing international dependence - had driven its population to exploit natural resources inappropriately. In addition, a veritable environmental

(Mr. Incer Barguero, Nicaragua)

debt was owed to Latin America, whose forests had been cleared, whose soil had been eroded and rivers polluted in order to support the markets of industrialized nations.

37. With nearly 30 million inhabitants, in 500,000 square kilometres, the Central American countries, including Belize and Panama, were perhaps the most densely populated in the region and had one of the highest population growth rates in the world. The isthmus was a genuine biological bridge between North America and South America, which separated two large seas and had tremendous biological diversity. As a tropical region whose countries were economically dependent, Central America was extremely vulnerable, both ecologically and economically.

38. In Central America, there was a high incidence of poisoning from the indiscriminate use of insecticides. In fact, 75 per cent of the insecticides that were banned or restricted in the United States were still in use there. A number of foreign enterprises had also bid on the use of Central American territory for discarding or incinerating toxic, highly polluting wastes that were virtually prohibited in the industrialized countries. That had moved the Central American Presidents to issue a joint ban on the establishment of such enterprises in their territory.

39. The Central American Presidents had also established the Central American Commission on Environment and Development in order to elaborate joint measures to preserve the natural heritage of the isthmus, ensure a more rational use of its resources and promote sustainable economic and social development. The clearing of rainforests for rather unproductive farmland or pastureland and the destruction of dry forests for fuelwood and charcoal were serious problems in Central America. The removal of vegetation cover was the chief cause of water and wind erosion which, in turn, depleted the soil. Extensive deforestation had also altered the hydrological system, clogged energy-generating dams, depleted fauna and flora and reduced biodiversity. The extinction of hundreds of species annually, many of which had never been identified or analysed, was a genuine loss to mankind. It was well known that most of the foodstuffs and medicinal drugs in the world had their origin in species native to tropical forests.

40. The Central American countries had acted on the proposals of the Central American Commission on Environment and Development, adapting them to meet their own requirements. They had also concluded bilateral agreements or agreements among several neighbouring countries designating certain border areas as national parks or biological reserves. Among the parks and reserves in question were the Trifinio (Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras), La Amistad (Costa Rica and Panama), "Si-a-Paz" (system of protected areas for peace) (Nicaragua and Costa Rica) and Rio Coco-Patuca (Nicaragua and Honduras).

41. The Central American Commission on Environment and Development had also adopted a number of United Nations positions on the environment, including: (a) land management with a view to preserving essential ecosystems for

(Mr. Incer Barguero, Nicaragua)

agriculture, forestry development, rational use of natural species, and ecotourism; (b) management and planning of sustainable exploitation of renewable mainland or marine resources without inhibiting or destroying the nature's regenerative capacity; (c) control and management in situ of hydrographic basins for proper soil, water and vegetation use with a view to preventing erosion and the drying-up or pollution of sources of drinking water and sources of water used for irrigation, navigation, fishing, recreation or generating power; (d) sound management and integral exploitation of forests, forest flora and fauna, gathered produce and fishing products, and promotion of agroforestry, forestry, aquaculture, mariculture, hunting and animal husbandry; (e) establishment of natural land, lake, river, coastal or marine reserves and frontier parks in order to ensure the conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity and prepare for ecotourism and national recreation, while at the same time safeguarding the right of indigenous groups to maintain traditional cultivation methods in such natural areas; (f) control of all aspects of pollution and environmental deterioration affecting health and biological resources; (g) launching of an ongoing environmental education campaign and training courses for technical experts and professionals in ecology and natural resources; (h) provision of support to environmental research centres conducting studies on species and natural resources in Central America; (i) promotion of ecology- and environment-related scientific and technological ideas and projects relevant to the ecological development of Central America in the twenty-first century. In September 1991, the Central American countries had adopted a Tropical Forestry Action Plan for Central America (PATFCA), which included programmes for the forest protection, reforestation and energy technology and emphasized strengthening national capacities in its first phase. Implementation of the Plan would require $158.6 million in external resources.

42. Nicaragua had the largest surface area and the lowest population density in Central America, and was endowed with freshwater and marine fish resources and extensive freshwater lakes. Forests covered 60 per cent of its territory and 35 per cent was covered by tropical rainforest.

43. On taking office, President Chamorro had outlined her Government's policy on environment and natural resources, which she had proceeded to implement by firmly supporting the Nicaraguan Institute for Natural Resources and Environment (IRENA), establishing the National Commission on Environment and Land Management (CONAMOR) and organizing an interdisciplinary, cross-sectoral unit to elaborate a conservation strategy for sustained national development.

44. The Government had also set short-term environmental management goals and a medium- and long-term development strategy. The priority areas of the 1990-1992 programme of action included: (a) development of a national environmental conservation strategy; (b) integrated management of hydrographic basins in order to conserve water and soil and sustain agricultural production; (c) land resources management, including the establishment of an agricultural and ecological register; (d) a national campaign for

(Mr. Incer Barquero, Nicaragua)

reforestation, agroforestry and forest-derived energy; (e) establishment of protected border areas in order to ensure peace, conservation and development, and establishment of a sustainable national park system; (f) rational management of forest fauna and of coastal resources and freshwater fish stocks; (g) monitoring of environmental pollution; (h) a national environmental education campaign; (i) support to non-governmental organizations; (j) establishment of environmental research centres specializing in ecosystems, species and natural resources; and (k) training in environmental sciences and natural resources management. Nicaragua would also review and update its legislation on environmental protection.

45. Nicaragua had recently joined the world-wide "Save the Earth" campaign, sponsored jointly by the United Nations Development Programme, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the World Wildlife Fund. On joining, it had designated a number of protected areas and two vast biological reserves covering a total of 2.7 million hectares, thus becoming the Central American country with the greatest percentage of territory set aside for conservation. Furthermore, it had established a vast natural resources reserve at Bosaguas in order to protect the virgin forest in the central and northern parts of the country, as well as the way of life of the indigenous Sumo communities. It had also declared the Cayos Miskito archipelago, a nature reserve, which would protect the indigenous Miskito communities.

46. The Central American countries would make their positions known at the Conference on Environment and Development, within the framework of the platform drawn up at the Regional Preparatory Meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean countries at Tlatelolco, in Mexico. To that end, they would participate actively in the final session of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference.

47. Mr. SARDENBERG (Brazil) said that predatory behaviour and misuse of environmental resources had begun long before the twentieth century and even before the Industrial Revolution. However, the pace at which resources were being used had been accelerated in the twentieth century by nuclear weapons and other inventions that caused environmental pollution and degradation.

48. Ensuring a healthier environment would necessitate changing patterns of production and consumption imposed by the developed countries. The protection and rational utilization of biological diversity was a case in point. Biological resources and genetic material were the heritage of the countries in which they were located, but their value was determined by the services and goods they generated, particularly through the use of biotechnology. That conservationist approach had led to the concentration of profits from biological resources in the hands of those possessing the technological know-how and the wherewithal to process them. However, the economic and social situation of owner countries could be improved through a holistic approach to the use of biological resources and genetic material near the protected areas.

(Mr. Sardenberg, Brazil)

49. Traditionally, the wealthier countries had been blamed for transboundary environmental degradation and had been called on to provide compensation. By contrast, problems of a local nature in the developing countries were usually dealt with from the limited perspective of providing assistance. A new partnership should be forged on the premise that global support should be given to regional and local initiatives to protect the environment and biodiversity and they, in turn, should contribute to the solution of global problems. Adequate prices reflecting both the economic and the environmental value of biological resources, would be the best possible incentive for such a partnership. To that end, effective mechanisms must be established in order to make technology and funding available to owner countries that did not have the means to process their biological resources. The negotiation of the convention on biological diversity under the auspices of UNEP should contribute significantly to building that new partnership.

50. Aware that the new partnership would also require action at the national level, the Brazilian Government had adopted wide-ranging measures to protect the environment, with emphasis on the protection of biological diversity and forests. Brazil was cooperating with the European Community and the World Bank in the elaboration of the "Pilot Programme of the Tropical Forests in Brazil". It was Brazil's hope that the financial commitments made by the Governments which had originally proposed the programme would be honoured.

51. Addressing the situation in urban centres was another component of Brazil's environmental policy. Perhaps no issue illustrated the linkage between environment and development more forcefully than the plight of cities and regions, particularly those whose population had mushroomed as a result of industrial concentration and migratory flows. The problem was particularly acute in the developing countries, which did not have the means to combat pollution or upgrade sanitary facilities in urban centres.

52. Brazil, which had a large semi-arid area in its territory, attached particular importance to the issue of desertification and drought and hoped that the Conference on Environment and Development would adopt measures to strengthen international programmes in that area. The continued expansion of deserts, particularly in Africa, despite the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, was disturbing.

53. Mr. AKUNWAFOR (Nigeria) said that - in view of the environmental degradation resulting from patterns of production and consumption in developed countries, which must be arrested and reversed, and the inevitable though unhealthy exploitation of natural resources in developing countries - the international community must urgently address such issues as deforestation, drought, desertification, climate change, protection of the ozone layer, transboundary air and water pollution, contamination of oceans and seas and the rational use of land, water and energy.

(Mr. Akunwafor, Nigeria)

54. Developing countries were extremely vulnerable to environmental degradation, not only as a result of transboundary incidents over which they had no control, but also as a result of their own national development efforts. In particular, they were unable to deal effectively with the negative impact of development activities for lack of adequate technology. In accordance with the principle of shared responsibility, developed countries should make every effort to contribute to the sustainable development of developing countries and facilitate the transfer of environmentally sound technology to the developing countries on concessional terms. The responsibility of the developed countries for global environmental degradation had been stressed by the Preparatory Committee for the Conference on Environment and Development at its third session.

55. At the same time, tradition and inertia in the developing countries had also contributed to environmental degradation. Anxious to promote industrial development, agricultural activity and trade, developing countries had resorted to deforestation, soil erosion and desertification. Even where modern techniques had replaced traditional methods, inefficient waste disposal created enormous national and transboundary health hazards.

56. International cooperation to protect the environment would be crucial as the century drew to a close. Such cooperation must be sensitive to the national requirements of developing countries and not force them to take action that would be to their detriment. Development cooperation for environmental protection should address problems such as desertification, toxic and hazardous waste disposal, and deforestation, and should promote environmentally sound development. Thus far, development assistance had not meaningfully addressed those issues.

57. Inequalities in international economic relations and the deteriorating quality of life in many developing countries had contributed to environmental degradation. The mounting debt burden, painful structural adjustment programmes compounded by worsening terms of trade, inadequate and dwindling financial flows, chronic trade deficits and the developed countries' stubborn pursuit of protectionism had severely diminished developing countries' resources. Unless economic issues were properly addressed, it would be extremely difficult for developing countries to deal effectively with environmental degradation.

58. In order to pursue sound environmental policies and achieve their goal of sustainable development, developing countries required substantial additional resources, including access to environmentally sound technology at affordable prices. His delegation underscored the importance of coordinating positions on issues of major concern on the agenda of the Conference on Environment and Development. Any global initiative to overcome the world's grave environmental problems would require concerted international cooperation based on an equitable sharing of responsibilities that took account of the existing asymmetries between developed and developing countries.

(Mr. Akunwafor, Nigeria)

59. Nigeria had always supported the work of UNCHS (Habitat), and had recently launched a national housing policy designed to further the goal of adequate shelter for all by the year 2000. The question of human settlements should be given high priority at the Conference on Environment and Development.

60. The international community should endeavour to develop environmentally sound technologies that could be made available to all countries. In order to facilitate that task, the Conference should establish an international mechanism to implement a truly global programme of action that would not prejudice the development aspirations of developing countries.

61. Mr. GATHUNGU (Kenya) said that his delegation supported the statements made by the Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, the Executive Director of UNCHS (Habitat) and the Director of UNSO, and fully endorsed their urgent appeals to the international community for adequate financial, technical and human resources.

62. UNEP had a crucial role to play in the preparatory process leading up to the Conference on Environment and Development. The UNEP Governing Council at its sixteenth session had accomplished a great deal of work that would be of use to the Preparatory Committee for the Conference at its fourth session. The reports that the Council had requested UNEP to make available to the Preparatory Committee at its fourth session dealt with such complex issues as the protection and development of oceans and coastal areas, international environmental law, toxic chemicals, hazardous waste and desertification.

63. His delegation was encouraged that the important issue of human settlements had found its rightful place in the preparatory process for the Conference, and looked forward to the contributions that the Commission on Human Settlements would make to the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee. His delegation also commended the efforts of UNSO to assist African countries in preparing for the Conference, and hoped that the international community would provide the Office with the resources needed to assure the continued success of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification.

64. Mr. TOURE (Guinea-Bissau) said that Guinea-Bissau was a country of the Sudano-Sahelian region whose environment had changed dramatically in recent years as a result of the destructive effects of desertification. Desertification often had disastrous consequences for the economies of the countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region, most of which were least developed countries. Aware of the opportunity afforded by the Conference on Environment and Development, the countries of the region had prepared national reports and had actively participated in the preparations for the Conference. In those two activities, they had received assistance from such subregional organizations as the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel and from the United Nations system, in particular UNSO.

(Mr. Toure, Guinea-Bissau)

65. Agenda 21, which would be adopted by the Conference, underscored the interrelatedness of all development activities in maintaining a sound environment. In that regard, the countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region had taken measures to strengthen their programming and planning capacities in the area of natural resources management.

66. His delegation thanked the donor countries for assisting the countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region in their efforts to overcome underdevelopment and to combat desertification, as well as all the organizations of the United Nations system, whose untiring efforts were a source of encouragement and moral support.

67. Mrs. AMARESEKARE (Sri Lanka) said that her delegation endorsed the report of the Commission on Human Settlements (A/46/8). It wished in particular to draw attention to Commission resolution 13/2 on the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, on which the Second Committee was to take a decision. The Commission's proposal to convene, "possibly in 1997, a United Nations conference on human settlements (Habitat II)" was both appropriate and necessary, and her delegation looked forward to the Secretary-General's report on the subject.

AGENDA ITEM 84: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)

(b) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE (continued) (A/C.2/46/L.42 and L.48/Rev.1)

Draft resolution on emergency assistance to the Sudan and Operation Lifeline Sudan (A/C.2/46/L.48/Rev.1)

68. Mr. BATAYNEH (Jordan), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of its sponsors, said that he hoped that it would be adopted without a vote.

69. Mr. AJAVON (Togo) said that his delegation had become a sponsor of the draft resolution.

Draft resolution on special assistance to Yemen (A/C.2/46/L.42)

70. The CHAIRMAN announced that Suriname had become a sponsor of the draft resolution.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

Official Records

SECOND COMMITTEE
51st meeting
held on
Tuesday, 26 November 1991
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 51st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. BURKE (Ireland)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 77: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

(a) TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(e) ENVIRONMENT (continued)

(g) HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (continued)

(j) EFFECTIVE MOBILIZATION AND INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 82: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 84: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)

(b) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 90: INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND THE DIVERSIFICATION AND MODERNIZATION OF PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (continued)

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

This record is subject to correction.
Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned within one week of the date of publication to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

91-57653 5416S (E)

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.2/46/SR.51
2 December 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/C.2/46/L.62, L.63 and L.64)

Draft decision on the Second Transport and Communications Decade in Africa (A/C.2/46/L.62)

Draft decision on the Europe-Africa permanent link through the Strait of Gibraltar (A/C.2/46/L.63)

Draft decision on the Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa (1991-2000) (A/C.2/46/L.64)

1. Mr. MAMFOUMBI (Gabon), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, introduced the three draft decisions. He hoped that the drafts would be adopted at the current session of the General Assembly.

Draft decision on Phase II of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific, 1985-1994 (A/C.2/46/L.65)

2. Mr. BUTAYNEH (Jordan) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors.

AGENDA ITEM 77: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

Draft resolutions on the report of the South Commission (A/C.2/46/L.26 and L.73)

3. Mr. BARAC (Romania), Vice-Chairman, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.73, which he was submitting on the basis of informal consultations held on draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.26. He recommended that the draft resolution should be adopted without a vote.

4. Draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.73 was adopted.

5. Draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.26 was withdrawn.

(a) TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/C.2/46/L.22 and L.57)

Draft resolution on specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of land-locked developing countries (A/C.2/46/L.57)

6. Mr. MUGAME (Uganda), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors, which had been joined by Chad, Malawi and Mali, said that he hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted without a vote.

Draft resolution on strengthening international organizations in the area of multilateral trade (A/C.2/46/L.22)

7. Mr. ZIARAN (Islamic Republic of Iran), Vice-Chairman, reporting on the results of the informal consultations, recommended that the draft resolution should be adopted without a vote.

8. Draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.22 was adopted.

(e) ENVIRONMENT (continued) (A/C.2/46/L.71 and L.74)

Draft resolution on international cooperation to mitigate the environmental consequences on Kuwait and other countries in the region resulting from the situation between Iraq and Kuwait (A/C.2/46/L.71)

9. Mr. AL-SALLAL (Kuwait), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors, which had been joined by China, Jordan, Samoa and Sri Lanka, said that he hoped that the draft would be adopted without a vote.

Draft resolution on environment and agricultural protectionist policies (A/C.2/46/L.74)

10. Mr. SERSALE di CERISANO (Argentina), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors, which had been joined by Nicaragua and Samoa, said that the United Nations had an important role to play in studying the relationship between environment and agricultural protectionist policies, and he hoped the General Assembly would decide to include an item on the subject in the provisional agenda of its forty-seventh session.

(g) HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (continued) (A/C.2/46/L.58)

Draft resolution on living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory (A/C.2/46/L.58)

11. Ms. JANJUA (Pakistan), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors, which had been joined by Mauritania, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, said that she hoped the draft would be adopted without a vote.

(j) EFFECTIVE MOBILIZATION AND INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/C.2/46/L.20 and L.61)

Draft resolutions on women, environment, population and sustainable development (A/C.2/46/L.20 and L.61)

12. Mr. ZIARAN (Islamic Republic of Iran), Vice-Chairman, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.61, which he was submitting on the basis of the informal consultations held on draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.20. He recommended that the draft should be adopted without a vote.

13. Draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.61 was adopted.

14. Draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.20 was withdrawn.

AGENDA ITEM 82: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/C.2/46/L.66, L.67, L.69 and L.70 and Corr.1)

Draft resolution on operational activities for development of the United Nations system (A/C.2/46/L.66)

15. Mr. KUFUOR (Ghana), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77, said that he hoped that the draft would be adopted without a vote.

Draft decision on technical cooperation among developing countries as a modality in the formulation, preparation, execution and evaluation of the projects implemented by the organs, organizations, bodies, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system in the economic, social and related fields (A/C.2/46/L.67)

16. Mr. KUFUOR (Ghana) introduced the draft decision on behalf of the Group of 77.

Draft resolution on operational activities for development (A/C.2/46/L.69)

17. Mr. RADE (Netherlands), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors, which had been joined by Austria, Japan, Luxembourg and Portugal, said that Ghana had introduced a draft resolution on the same subject (A/C.2/46/L.66). The sponsors hoped that the two draft resolutions could be integrated into one consensus resolution, that would be adopted without a vote.

Draft decision on operational activities for development (A/C.2/46/L.70 and Corr.1)

18. Mr. HJELMAKER (Sweden) introduced the draft decision on behalf of the Nordic countries.

AGENDA ITEM 84: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)

(b) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE (continued) (A/C.2/46/L.2/Rev.2, L.35, L.37, L.42, and L.46)

Draft resolution on a Special Plan of Economic Cooperation for Central America (A/C.2/46/L.2/Rev.2)

19. Mr. ZIARAN (Islamic Republic of Iran), Vice-Chairman, reporting on the results of the informal consultations, recommended that the draft should be adopted without a vote. He said that in the first line of paragraph 4 the word "Member" and the words "and observers" should be deleted. In paragraph 8 the word "its" should be inserted before the word "implementation".

20. Mr. TIKANVAARA (Finland) and Mr. LIMON (Suriname) said that their delegations wished to join the sponsors of the resolution.

21. Draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.2/Rev.2, as orally revised, was adopted.

Draft resolution on special economic assistance to Chad (A/C.2/46/L.35)

22. Mr. ZIARAN (Islamic Republic of Iran), Vice-Chairman, reporting on the results of the informal consultations, recommended that draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.35 should be adopted without a vote.

23. Draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.35 was adopted.

24. Mr. VALENZUELA (Honduras), Mr. FALL (Senegal), Mr. ALIOU MOUSSA (Cameroon), Mr. BALE (Congo) and Mr. HERRERA (Costa Rica) said that their delegations wished to join the sponsors of the resolution.

25. Mr. STOBY (Secretary of the Committee) said that there were procedural difficulties in becoming sponsors of a resolution once it had been adopted. However, note would be taken of the intentions of the delegations concerned.

26. Mr. TOROU (Chad) expressed his gratitude to the members of the Committee for reaching a consensus on the resolution just adopted.

Draft resolution on assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon (A/C.2/46/L.37)

27. Mr. ZIARAN (Islamic Republic of Iran), Vice-Chairman, reporting on the results of the informal consultations on the subject, recommended that the draft should be adopted without a vote. He said that Pakistan wished to join the sponsors. In paragraph 4 the words "take the steps necessary" should read "take necessary steps", and in paragraph 5 (b) the words "resident representative" should be replaced by "resident coordinator".

28. Draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.37, as orally revised, was adopted.

29. Mr. MAHMOUD (Lebanon) said that his delegation wished to thank the members of the Committee for adopting the resolution, since the assistance concerned was vital for rebuilding his country's infrastructure and revitalizing its economy.

Draft resolution on special assistance to Yemen (A/C.2/46/L.42)

30. Mr. ZIARAN (Islamic Republic of Iran), Vice-Chairman, reporting on the informal consultations held on the draft resolution, recommended that the draft should be adopted without a vote. He said that Algeria, Costa Rica, Honduras, Oman, Suriname and Yemen had joined the sponsors. In paragraph 1 the word "special" should be inserted before the word "assistance".

31. Mr. JOMAA (Tunisia) said that his delegation also wished to join the sponsors of the resolution.

32. Draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.42, as orally revised, was adopted.

33. Mr. MISSARY (Yemen) thanked the Committee for adopting the resolution, which reflected the international community's concern at the situation in Yemen. He also wished to mention the earthquake which had occurred in his country on 20 November 1991, leaving hundreds of victims and destroying homes. His Government was doing everything possible to deal with the disaster but the special assistance was urgently required. He also expressed appreciation of the work of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator in evaluating the impact of the disaster.

Draft resolution on emergency assistance to the Philippines (A/C.2/46/L.46)

34. Mr. ZIARAN (Islamic Republic of Iran), Vice-Chairman, said that the following countries had joined the sponsors of the draft: Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, Italy, Jamaica, Kenya, Kuwait, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Mozambique, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Suriname, Sweden, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, Venezuela, Yemen and Zambia. Following informal consultations, it had been decided to change the word "aid" in the title of the draft and in paragraph 1 to "assistance". Commending the negotiating parties on the spirit of compromise that had been displayed in working on the text of the resolution, he said he hoped that the same spirit would continue to inform the Committee's work on other resolutions and that draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.46 would be adopted without a vote.

35. Draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.46, as orally revised, was adopted.

36. Mr. GUERRERO (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the sponsors of the draft resolution just adopted as well as on behalf of the people and the Government of the Philippines, expressed his appreciation for the adoption of the resolution by consensus. He also wished to convey the gratitude of the Philippine people to all donor countries and to the agencies of the United Nations system for the assistance they had rendered so promptly to the Philippines.

AGENDA ITEM 90: INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND THE DIVERSIFICATION AND MODERNIZATION OF PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (continued) (A/C.2/46/L.17 and L.72)

Draft resolution on industrial development cooperation and the diversification and modernization of productive activities in developing countries

37. Mr. BARAC (Romania), Vice-Chairman, introducing draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.72, said that the consensus text now before the Committee had been prepared during informal consultations on the basis of draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.17. He recommended that the text should be adopted without a vote.

38. Draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.72 was adopted.

39. Draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.17 was withdrawn.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

40. The CHAIRMAN announced that a number of delegations wished to join in sponsoring draft resolutions which the Committee would consider. The draft resolutions and respective sponsors were A/C.2/46/L.25 (agenda item 77 (i)) - Peru, Samoa, Singapore and Uruguay; A/C.2/46/L.39 (agenda item 83) - France and Iceland; A/C.2/46/L.47 (agenda item 82) - Chad; and A/C.2/46/L.49 (agenda item 85) - Argentina, Belgium, Côte d'Ivoire, Spain, Suriname and Turkey. Following informal consultations, a revised text of resolution A/C.2/46/L.25 had been prepared and would be issued under the symbol A/C.2/46/L.25/Rev.1. In addition, a number of countries had expressed their desire to withdraw from the list of sponsors of resolution A/C.2/46/L.47, namely: the Comoros, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Venezuela.

41. Mr. JOMAA (Tunisia) said that when requests were made to the President of the General Assembly concerning postponements of deadlines, it should be pointed out that delays in the Committee's work were caused by the non-availability of the necessary documentation. Representations should be made concerning the need for increased resources to be allocated for administrative purposes, so that the Organization could dispatch its work with the required efficiency.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.